

# Race Relations in Pemiscot County

Missouri Advisory Committee to the  
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

October 1994

*This summary report of the Missouri Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights was prepared for the information and consideration of the Commission. Statements and viewpoints in the report should not be attributed to the Commission or to the Advisory Committee, but only to individual participants in the community forum where the information was gathered.*

## **THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS**

The United States Commission on Civil Rights, first created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, and reestablished by the United States Commission on Civil Rights Act of 1983, is an independent, bipartisan agency of the Federal Government. By the terms of the 1983 act, the Commission is charged with the following duties pertaining to discrimination or denial of the equal protection of the laws based on race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin, or in the administration of justice; investigation of individual discriminatory denials of the right to vote; study of legal developments with respect to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the law; appraisal of the laws and policies of the United States with respect to discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; and investigation of patterns or practices of fraud or discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections. The Commission is also required to submit reports to the President and the Congress at such times as the Commission, the Congress, or the President shall deem desirable.

## **THE STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

An Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights has been established in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia pursuant to section 105(c) of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and section 6(c) of the United States Commission on Civil Rights Act of 1983. The Advisory Committees are made up of responsible persons who serve without compensation. Their functions under their mandate from the Commission are to: advise the Commission of all relevant information concerning their respective States on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission; advise the Commission on matters of mutual concern in the preparation of reports of the Commission to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public and private organizations, and public officials upon matters pertinent to inquiries conducted by the State Advisory Committee; initiate and forward advice and recommendations to the Commission upon matters in which the Commission shall request the assistance of the State Advisory Committee; and attend, as observers, any open hearing or conference that the Commission may hold within the State.

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## **Letter of Transmittal**

Missouri Advisory Committee to the  
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

### **Members of the Commission**

Mary Frances Berry, *Chairperson*  
Cruz Reynoso, *Vice Chairperson*  
Carl A. Anderson  
Arthur A. Fletcher  
Robert George  
Constance Horner  
Russell G. Redenbaugh  
Charles Pei Wang

Mary K. Mathews, *Staff Director*

The Missouri Advisory Committee submits this community forum summary report, *Race Relations in Pemiscot County*, to you pursuant to our responsibility to forward information to the Commission about matters that the Advisory Committee has studied. By a vote of 11 to 0, the Advisory Committee approved submission of this report to the Commissioners.

This report stems from a community forum held in Hayti Heights, Missouri, in September 1992, to obtain a sense of race relations in this rural area of Missouri. Over 30 persons appeared before the Advisory Committee to provide information on education, employment and job training, housing, and in the administration of justice. Some participants painted a dismal picture concerning the recruitment of black teachers in the school districts of Caruthersville and Hayti. Others were concerned about employment and training opportunities. Some discussed the lack of adequate stock of housing and yet others talked about police-community relations. Those persons who participated in the Advisory Committee meeting were given an opportunity to comment on relevant sections of the report. Where appropriate, comments and corrections indicated by them have been incorporated into the final report.

The Advisory Committee is hopeful that this report will contribute to a constructive dialogue on race relations in Pemiscot County. When so much attention is placed on urban problems in America, problems of rural areas like Pemiscot County are not viewed in the same context. Yet persons living in Pemiscot County are hopeful that agencies like the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will begin to focus more attention to problems facing small rural communities.

The Advisory Committee appreciates the opportunity to provide this report to the Commissioners and will continue to apprise the body of civil rights developments in Pemiscot County.

Respectfully,



Cora D. Thompson, *Chairperson*  
Missouri Advisory Committee

**MISSOURI ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE  
U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS**

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\*No longer a member of the Committee.

\*\*Not a member when community forum was held.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Missouri Advisory Committee wishes to thank the staff of the Commission's Central Regional Office for its help in the preparation of this report. The project was the principal assignment of Ascension Hernandez, with support from Jo Ann Daniels. The report was written by Melvin L. Jenkins. The report was prepared for publication by Gloria Hong Izumi. The project was carried out under the overall supervision of Melvin L. Jenkins, Director, Central Regional Office.

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## **1. Introduction**

In the spring of 1992 the Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights expressed a concern that, more often than not, civil rights issues in rural towns in the State do not receive the same attention as those in metropolitan areas. As an outgrowth of this concern, the Advisory Committee asked Commission regional office staff to examine civil rights issues in the Bootheel of Missouri, and in particular, Pemiscot County.

As background for the Advisory Committee's undertaking, it took note of earlier Committee studies, *Race Relations in the "Kingdom" of Callaway*,<sup>1</sup> and *Race Relations in Cooper County, Missouri*.<sup>2</sup> Those reports recorded concerns raised by black persons living in those rural areas about housing, employment, public schools, and the administration of justice.<sup>3</sup>

The Advisory Committee also reviewed and used the format similar to the Commission's report on rural Alabama.<sup>4</sup>

In September 1992 the Advisory Committee conducted a community forum in Hayti Heights, Missouri. Over 30 persons appeared before the Committee to discuss their concerns about race relations in this rural area.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Race Relations in the "Kingdom" of Callaway* (May 1979).

<sup>2</sup>Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Race Relations in Cooper County, Missouri* (May 1979).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Fifteen Years Ago....Rural Alabama Revisited*, Clearinghouse Publication No. 82 (December 1983).

<sup>5</sup>Community Forum Meeting, Before the Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hayti Heights, Missouri, Sept. 17-18, 1992 (hereafter cited as Transcript).

## The Setting

Pemiscot County is one of six counties located in the Bootheel of Missouri. (See map 1.) The earliest recorded history of the entire southeast Missouri lowland area is included in reports made by Hernando De Soto who explored the area in approximately 1540. According to legend, the area grew, approximately from the year 1790 to about 1811-12, at which time the famous New Madrid earthquake occurred. Many inhabitants abandoned the area following the earthquake. Few if any records exist between the period 1812-1856. However, it is believed that general destruction of the area by the New Madrid earthquake made the area slow to settle and develop.<sup>6</sup> In 1851 Pemiscot County was organized.<sup>7</sup>

The three major cities reviewed by the Advisory Committee in Pemiscot were Caruthersville, Hayti, and Hayti Heights. Caruthersville was named in honor of Sam Caruthers of Madison County, a representative to Congress from the area. The city was incorporated in May 1874.<sup>8</sup>

The establishment of the city of Hayti Heights grew out of a concern that the community could not provide basic services for its citizens.<sup>9</sup> The community was established in the 1940s when displaced black migrant workers began buying lots on a low-lying farm field outside the city of Hayti, Missouri, in Pemiscot County.<sup>10</sup> These workers built wooden shanties on the lots in the area but continued to adopt the life of migrants,

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<sup>6</sup>Daniel J. Bollinger, Sr., *Comprehensive Plan for Caruthersville, Missouri*, p. 3 (February 1992)(hereafter cited as Comprehensive Plan).

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

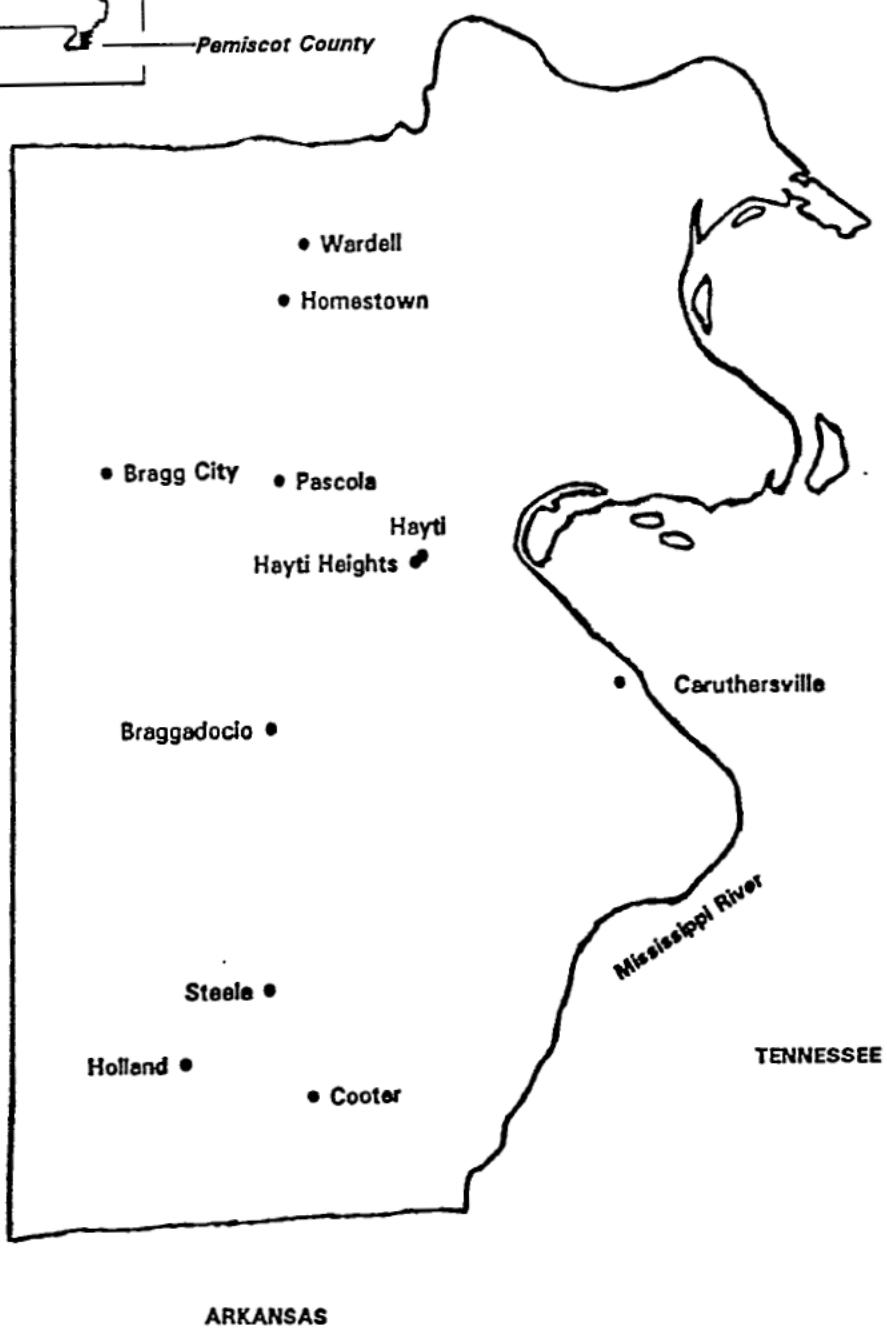
<sup>9</sup>Nina M. Ogle (in collaboration with Prof. Kenneth F. Johnson, both of the University of Missouri-St. Louis), *Hayti Heights: Community-Building in the Missouri Bootheel*, August 1979, p. 3 (hereafter cited as Bootheel Report).

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

### **MAP 1. Pemiscot County**



*—Pemiscot County*



built wooden shanties on the lots in the area but continued to adopt the life of migrants, following the various harvests across the country but always returning to the Hayti Heights community during the off-season.<sup>11</sup> During the 1940s and 1950s, Hayti Heights grew, attracting new residents from the surrounding southern States. The influx of black migrant workers in Hayti Heights continued until the 1960s when mechanized agriculture and increased employment of other minority migrant workers began to take over the jobs that these black laborers had depended on for a living.<sup>12</sup>

This seasonal migration partly contributed to a currently important circumstance, that of poorly constructed houses. Many of the houses were built of wood and were not insulated. These black migrant workers were forced by economic circumstances to continue to live in these substandard structures.<sup>13</sup>

The population of Pemiscot County in the late 1940s was approximately 46,857. By the late 1970s the population had decreased to about 26,373, largely as a result of outward migration brought on by the cotton picker and the resulting lack of jobs. By 1978 the average annual income for Hayti Heights residents was estimated at \$751, compared to \$2,253 for the rest of Pemiscot County.<sup>14</sup>

According to background information given to the Advisory Committee by Daniel J. Bolinger, Sr., director of the Bootheel Regional Planning and Economic Commission, the 1990 census figures for Pemiscot County show a total of 21,921, or a decline of 3,066

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

persons from the 1980 census.<sup>15</sup> The county's top three towns in 1990 were Caruthersville, 7,389 persons; Hayti, 3,280; and Steele, 2,395.<sup>16</sup> The total number of minorities in Pemiscot County in 1990 was 5,746 of whom 5,596 were black, 34 American Indians, 51 Asian or Pacific Islanders, 89 Hispanics, and 18 of other races.<sup>17</sup>

In 1986 actual per capita income in Pemiscot County was approximately \$8,551, as compared to \$13,916 for the State, which was about 38 percent below the State average. Some 28.6 percent of the households in Pemiscot County receive some form of income maintenance guarantee as compared to 19.6 percent of the households throughout the State.<sup>18</sup>

According to Mr. Bolinger, the unemployment rate for Pemiscot County varies between 9 and 18 percent, depending upon the time of year. He explained that the unemployment rate declines during the summer because of agribusiness' use of persons to farm and harvest crops.<sup>19</sup> The unemployment rate for minorities in the county remains somewhat more constant, fluctuating between 25-28 percent of the unemployment rate of 9 to 18 percent.<sup>20</sup>

In order to get some idea as to the climate of race relations in Pemiscot County, with a focus on Caruthersville, Hayti, and Hayti Heights, the Advisory Committee invited various

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<sup>15</sup>Comprehensive Plan, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>19</sup>Transcript, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 20. (See also app. A.)

community leaders, government officials, and interested citizens knowledgeable about the area to report on education, employment, housing, and police-community relations. A community forum was held in Hayti Heights for the exchange of information.

## 2. Education

### Caruthersville School District

R.H. McCoin, director of Secondary Education for the Caruthersville School District, reported that the district had 1,615 students enrolled in grades K-12. Of this total approximately 45 percent were minorities. About 10 percent of the high school students attended the local vocational education school.<sup>1</sup>

In describing the district's enrollment Mr. McCoin noted that 76 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunches. Further, about 33 percent of the students were from families that received Aid for Families of Dependent Children (AFDC).<sup>2</sup>

At the time of the Advisory Committee's community forum, Mr. McCoin said that the school district employed 127 certified staff members and 66 support staff.<sup>3</sup> However, only 4-5 percent of the certified staff were minorities and 14-20 percent of the support staff were minorities.<sup>4</sup>

The Reverend Betty Boston, a Methodist minister from Caruthersville, told the Advisory Committee that the local school district took 10 years to develop a federally mandated plan to desegregate schools.<sup>5</sup> The school district chose to consolidate but not integrate the schools. As a result, many black teachers lost their jobs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Community Forum Meeting, Before the Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hayti Heights, Missouri, Sept. 17-18, 1992, p. 208 (hereafter cited as Transcript).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 87-88.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

Reverend Boston's informal count of black school personnel included three teachers, five paraprofessionals, and about five support staff employed by the school district.<sup>7</sup> Further, there were no black persons holding high level administrative positions.<sup>8</sup> She noted that representatives of the black community have approached the school district to recruit more black persons for teaching positions.<sup>9</sup>

Reverend Boston alleged that there is a dual system of disciplinary rules in the school district in which black students receive harsher penalties than white students for the same or similar infraction of the rules. She also alleged that racial slurs by white students that are reported to administrators go unchecked.<sup>10</sup>

In discussing the quality of education in the school district, Reverend Boston said that in 1992, although 40 black students graduated from high school, more than 50 percent of those students were in special education classes. She expressed concern for those special education students, in as much as their diplomas would not aid them in obtaining a higher education. Reverend Boston also noted that at the other end of the spectrum, five black students went away to college.<sup>11</sup> She faulted the school system in terms of steering black students away from the proper guidance and vocational counseling that would help the students to make better career choices.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 90-92.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 95-96.

In responding to the concern about recruiting more minority teachers, Mr. McCoin stated that in his years in the district there have been few opportunities to interview minority applicants. He could recall only two minority applicants being interviewed in the last few years, and one was offered employment but turned down the offer.<sup>13</sup> When asked about the potential pool of minority applicants, Mr. McCoin indicated that his school district is competing with larger school districts such as St. Louis which can offer minority applicants more money, thus making it very difficult to recruit minority teachers.<sup>14</sup> He also noted:

We also know that many minority teachers leave teaching within 5 years after they start. It's of paramount importance that we develop caring, sensitive nonminority teachers as well as developing a way to attract minorities to the teaching profession. Our schools reflect the values of the larger society in which they exist. We must keep abreast of cultural influence that may enter or facilitate our effectiveness in teaching students regardless of their social, ethnic, religious, or racial background.<sup>15</sup>

Mr. McCoin also discussed, with the Advisory Committee, the allegation of disparate disciplinary treatment of black students. He said, "There were no efforts whatsoever to discriminate between minority children and white children."<sup>16</sup>

### Hayti School District

In 1992 the Hayti School District had a student population of 983 students in K-12, of whom minorities were 66 percent. According to George J. Byers, superintendent of the

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 209. (See also app. B.)

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 218-19.

Hayti School District, 80 percent of all students receive free or reduced lunches and between 500 and 600 students came from families receiving public assistance.<sup>17</sup>

Alma Nolen, a retired school teacher with 29 years of experience from the Hayti School District, raised several concerns regarding education in the school district. Her major concern was that there is only one black teacher at the high school level. Ms. Nolen stated that this void creates a problem for black high school students in relation to the lack of black role models in high school.<sup>18</sup>

Ms. Nolen pointed out that prior to desegregation of the school district, there were many capable black school teachers. Following desegregation some teachers were not retained by the district and others moved to larger cities seeking better opportunities.<sup>19</sup>

On the positive side, with respect to representation of blacks, Ms. Nolen noted that there are two black persons serving on the school board. But she still questions whether their presence on the school board was adequate representation given the number of black students in the school district.<sup>20</sup>

In speaking to the Advisory Committee about school board representation, Mr. Byers noted that there are six members on the school board, and all are elected at large. There are two black persons serving on the board.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 222-25.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 35-36.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

At the time of the Advisory Committee's meeting, Mr. Byers had been in his position for only a few months. He noted several concerns regarding the district, including that prior to his arrival the district had to release five teachers. Mr. Byers also told the Committee that the district experienced a deficit of \$229,000 during the preview year. He indicated a strong desire to reduce this figure.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

### **3. Employment**

Out of 115 counties, including 9 metropolitan statistical areas in the State, Pemiscot County had the ninth highest unemployment average for the period ending December 1993. The State, as a whole, had an average of 5.4 percent, while Pemiscot County had an average of 9.8 percent.<sup>1</sup>

According to Daniel J. Bolinger, Sr., the economy of Pemiscot County has been and will continue to depend on the agribusiness. The mechanization of agriculture has had a negative impact on the overall economy of the area due to the fact that people were displaced from work with little or no training and no other jobs available.<sup>2</sup>

Freddie Graham, manager of the Missouri Employment Security office located in Kennett, which provides services to Hayti, Hayti Heights, and Caruthersville, informed the Advisory Committee that of 3,041 persons who registered with her office from Pemiscot County for job placement, 34.4 percent were minorities. Moreover, she stated that of the overall referrals made by her office, 38.4 percent were minorities and of these, 38 percent were actually placed on jobs.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the available labor force and the high unemployment rate in the county, the Advisory Committee invited representatives of job assistance and training programs to provide information regarding employment skills development.

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<sup>1</sup>Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Missouri Area Labor Trends, (December 1993).

<sup>2</sup>Daniel J. Bollinger, Sr., Comprehensive Plan for Caruthersville, Missouri (February 1992), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Community Forum Meeting, Before the Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hayti Heights, Missouri, Sept. 17-18, 1992, p. 288 (hereafter cited as Transcript).

Russell Leek, Debbie Penick, and Tim Pulley of InterTech, Inc., provided an overview of a local job training program. According to a fact sheet given to the Advisory Committee, InterTech, Inc.,<sup>4</sup> is:

a private agency that receives Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds through the Southeast Missouri Private Industry Council. These funds are used to help people with employment barriers become productive members of the labor force. InterTech, Inc. addresses labor needs through establishing necessary employment and training programs. ....Due to limited funding sources, InterTech, Inc. may not be able to serve all who apply. In this case, services will be rendered to those most in need and likely to benefit from.<sup>5</sup>

InterTech, Inc., received the contract to operate the JPTA program in Pemiscot County and other areas of the Bootheel on July 1, 1992. It replaced the Delta Area Economic Opportunity Center (DAEOC), which had operated job training programs in Pemiscot County for many years. An outreach worker for DAEOC, Dorothy Walton, noted that there was not a smooth transition from DAEOC to InterTech, Inc. She told the Advisory Committee that the new contractor, InterTech, Inc., failed to provide DAEOC employees an opportunity to apply for positions.<sup>6</sup> Ms. Walton also expressed a concern that even had InterTech, Inc., offered her an opportunity to apply for a position, that she would not have been qualified because she did not have a college degree. She stated, "But I don't care what kind of degree you have, you're going to have to learn your job."<sup>7</sup> Finally, Ms. Walton complained that InterTech, Inc., had not developed an adequate outreach effort to

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<sup>4</sup>InterTech, Inc., has recently undergone a name change to SynTech, Inc., John E. Ellis, SynTech, Inc., letter to Melvin L. Jenkins, regional director, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Apr. 12, 1994.

<sup>5</sup>Undated fact sheet provided to the Advisory Committee at its meeting on Sept. 18, 1992, by representatives of InterTech, Inc.

<sup>6</sup>Transcript, p. 48.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

maintain those participants already under DAEOC programs and to recruit new enrollees in Pemiscot County.<sup>8</sup>

Mr. Leek stated to the Advisory Committee that Pemiscot County is one of 13 counties in the InterTech, Inc., service area. After several months under the contract, it had enrolled only 18 participants from Pemiscot County, 10 white females, 6 black females, and 2 black males.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Leek said that his office was in the process of recruiting additional participants but, due to funding, there will only be seven or eight new slots.<sup>10</sup>

Ms. Penick spoke about carryover participants from the DAEOC program. She said, "I think in any case where one agency takes over another agency's files, there is going to be confusion."<sup>11</sup> She further stated that if any carryover participants were terminated by InterTech, Inc., it was because the person was not eligible by the standards set by the U.S. Department of Labor.<sup>12</sup> Although some community members complained about the lack of job training opportunities in Hayti and Caruthersville, representatives of InterTech, Inc., indicated that they would increase outreach efforts to meet local needs.<sup>13</sup>

With respect to employees of InterTech, Inc., Mr. Leek reported that out of nine positions, all were held by white persons; seven white females and two white males.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 56-58.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 254-56.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

When questioned about the educational requirements for the positions at InterTech, Mr. Pulley said that the professional positions require a college degree with a teaching background.<sup>15</sup> Ms. Penick added:

We have three positions that do not require a college degree and those are clerical type positions. All other positions, as we stated earlier, we do consider professional positions. We're dealing with people's lives here and we do feel the need for our employees to have some type of training as far as counseling or working with clients on a one on one basis because most of our clients do.<sup>16</sup>

The funding source for InterTech, Inc., is the Southeast Missouri Private Industry Council (SEMO). It is a private nonprofit corporation that funds job training programs. Further, it is a partnership between private businesses and public organizations created by the Federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). In 1992 nearly \$4 million was allocated to SEMO for funding training programs which are administered by a board of directors. Based on JTPA requirements and regulations issued by the Missouri Division of Job Development and Training, the board of directors selects programs for funding, such as InterTech. The day-to-day program is administered by paid administrative staff.<sup>17</sup>

Mary McBride, executive director of SEMO, reported to the Advisory Committee that out of a potential of 34 executive board members in September 1992 only 1 was black. Out of 11 paid administrative staff, only 1 was black.<sup>18</sup> When asked whether there were any minorities in positions of authority or influence within SEMO, Ms. McBride responded:

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>17</sup>A Profile of Job Training, Southeast Missouri Private Industry Council, n.d.

<sup>18</sup>Transcript, p. 280.

A large majority of the State [employees], both at our level and our subcontractor level, have been the same statewide, are Caucasian females. We have a very low percentage of males in the system and we have, as I said, that 1 of our 11 staff [members] is black. I do not remember any black managers within our contract network of nine different agencies.<sup>19</sup>

In an update of information provided to the Advisory Committee Ms. McBride wrote that, currently out of 12 paid administrative staff, three are black.<sup>20</sup>

Ms. McBride provided the Advisory Committee with some program participation rates for Pemiscot and Dunklin Counties (Dunklin County was not a part of the Advisory Committee's review). She noted that 39 percent of the clients served were black; 71 percent were female; and 47 percent were youth, 21 years and under.<sup>21</sup> On April 14, 1994, Ms. McBride noted to the Advisory Committee that in Pemiscot County, 66 percent of the clients served were black; 34 percent were white; 61 percent were female; and 27 percent were youth.<sup>22</sup>

Given the high percentage of minority participation in the job training program, the Advisory Committee was still very concerned about the low participation of minority staff in the program. When asked by the Advisory Committee about affirmative action requirements and equal employment opportunity compliance by JTPA subcontractors, Ms. McBride said that boilerplate language is used in all contracts with JTPA subcontractors. Moreover, she

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<sup>19</sup>Tbid., p. 281.

<sup>20</sup>Mary McBride, executive director of SEMO, letter to Melvin L. Jenkins, Regional Director, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Apr. 15, 1994 (hereafter cited as McBride letter, Apr. 15, 1994).

<sup>21</sup>Transcript, p. 267.

<sup>22</sup>McBride letter, Apr. 15, 1994.

said that, "[SEMO does] not establish criteria that mandates racial participation from our subcontractors."<sup>23</sup>

### Economic Development

Due to the high unemployment rate in Pemiscot County, the Advisory Committee inquired into local efforts toward job creation and economic development. Don Lloyd, economic developer, city of Caruthersville, appeared before the Advisory Committee to provide an overview of current programs in that city.

According to Mr. Lloyd the key to jobs is through economic development and, in order for economic development to take place, a city must market the advantages of doing business in its community. The city of Caruthersville offers, "basic needs satisfaction such as utilities, land sites, buildings...., enterprise zones, benefits, and location."<sup>24</sup> The selling aspect of economic development is getting the attention of companies to visit the area to see the physical assets and the quality of life that can be offered.<sup>25</sup>

Mr. Lloyd related the success of the city in attracting a new industry. He said that R.T. Friction, a company that manufactures brake pads, will move a portion of its operation to Caruthersville. The company will employ 40 persons in its first year of operation. By the end of its second year of operation the company hopes to create 20 additional jobs because of various assistance programs being offered by the city.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Transcript, p. 284.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 301.

Mr. Lloyd noted:

After you get an industry in your city, you have to continually work with that industry because 98 percent of new jobs created come from expansion of existing industry as opposed to new plant construction.<sup>27</sup>

When questioned whether the city was interested in promoting business development in the black community by providing contracting opportunities, Mr. Lloyd responded:

No, not at this time. There is support from the black and white community as far as retail [is concerned]. What we are trying to do is, and what we are spending money for now is trying to attract new jobs to the city; black or white. The difficulty in this whole area is that Caruthersville is the only governmental entity in this whole county that is making economic development efforts at all. Although we [economic development] have a budget of \$73,000, after you pay somebody to do the job, hiring a secretary, pay for the phone bill, that leaves very little left for anything other than a minimum promotional job. And it is very frustrating.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 302-303.

#### **4. Housing**

Rose Williams, an outreach worker for an area community health center, told the Advisory Committee that the most difficult part of her job was to find decent housing for her clients. She said:

Housing is the hardest job. Now, I kind of walked out there thinking, you know, it's going to be a breeze and I'm telling them about eating right, and taking vitamins and iron. The first time that I went to a client, I walked in the living room, what was left of the living room, and the roof had been leaking for long enough time for the sofa and the area that the sofa was sitting in to be totally deteriorated. They were living primarily in the kitchen and dining room. The floor was just deteriorating. I said, is this real? So I kind of looked around. I sat down, you know, and thought, well, why does this exist here? Why would anyone have to live this way with all the money out there for housing? We're always talking about HUD and Habitat, public housing coming up all around. These people--it was just like the ceiling had just crashed in. I said, have you ever tried to get in public housing and she said yes, I'm on the waiting list. And these quotes, I'll never forget what she said. I said have you ever applied for a low income loan for a house through FHA, MFHA, any of those programs? She said, I applied and I was told that I didn't qualify because my husband owed a debt 20, 30 years ago. He had been dead 15, 16 years.<sup>1</sup>

An open session participant, Dorothy Russell, a resident of Hayti Heights, expressed her concerns about the serious need for housing for black persons. She said, "a single, black, male or female, if they have not already established housing, they most likely will have to live with their parents or a family member in this area."<sup>2</sup>

Ms. Russell told the Advisory Committee of her search for housing. She said:

I just got a house last year, but I couldn't get that house where I wanted. I would have loved to have lived in Hayti Heights, that's my home. I have lived there. I would have wanted to live in Hayti, but there was no house

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<sup>1</sup>Community Forum Meeting, Before the Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hayti Heights, Missouri, Sept. 17-18, 1992, pp. 62-63 (hereafter cited as Transcript).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

there for me. There's no house for me in Caruthersville because of my skin color. In Hayti Heights it's just there wasn't anything available. But, in Hayti and Caruthersville, I just have the wrong skin color. The last time I looked for a house in Caruthersville, I think it was about a month ago. A white friend of mine who had been living in Kansas City made the call for me. They reassured her that the house was available and we made an appointment for 5:30 and by the time we picked up the children and we picked up her children and we got to the house, the house had already been rented; between 5:00 to 5:30, especially when they saw I was black. She forgot to tell them I was black. I'm constantly told what side of town I should look on.<sup>3</sup>

Ms. Russell told the Advisory Committee that the house she is living in now is substandard. She said that the ceiling is falling and that:

in the process of getting ready for its meeting, I took something similar to a 2 by 4 and I propped it up against the ceiling, took my television, turned it over on the side, jammed it so it could not fall. Tonight it may fall away, but that is what the working black person has to look forward to in this town.<sup>4</sup>

Ms. Russell summed up her feelings about housing in the area by saying:

We do not qualify for anything. We make just enough to say that we do not qualify for anything, and yet we make so little that we cannot qualify for a loan or to buy or to build or to do anything. We're just like in the middle and I know this isn't just a problem for this area, this is a nationwide problem. But, especially when you're on minimum wages. And you can get in a trap. You can't go to school, you can't back up, you can't go forward. You're just there holding on to something until something happens. You can't really make it happen because you have to go to work. You have to support that house that's falling.<sup>5</sup>

Given the conditions of private housing in certain areas of Pemiscot County, the Advisory Committee requested information regarding the availability of public housing. T. Ralph Stone, the executive director of the Caruthersville Housing Authority, and William

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 125-26.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

Guise, the executive director of the Hayti Housing Authority, appeared before the Advisory Committee to provide information on public housing.

Mr. Stone said that the Caruthersville Housing Authority is "charged with the task of providing affordable housing for the community."<sup>6</sup> Funds for the development of public housing units come from the Federal Government but are administered by the city through a local board of directors. The local housing authority was established in 1965 and now operates approximately 449 units. Applicants for public housing must meet U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development guidelines to qualify to live in the federally subsidized units.<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Stone explained that once all the units have been occupied then his agency creates a waiting list of those who are eligible for housing. At one point the units were made available on a first come, first served basis. He related that in 1987 the rules were changed to create a preference for those persons who live in substandard housing or persons who are about to be displaced, or persons who are paying 50 percent of their adjusted income for rent and utilities.<sup>8</sup> Mr. Stone believed that preference rules in some instances are unfair. As an example, if a person has been on the waiting list for 6 months and a person with one of the three preferences applies for a unit, then the person with a preference is placed at the top of

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-70.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 170-71.

the waiting list.<sup>9</sup> But on the other hand, he said there is no waiting list for housing for the elderly and general two-bedroom units; those units are not in great demand.<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Stone discussed with pride to a modification program undertaken by the housing authority. He related that in an all black neighborhood, Adams Corners, the city, along with the housing authority, acquired properties and housing units that were substandard. This area housed 17 families. With funds obtained from HUD, the housing authority renovated the area and built an eight-unit townhouse complex, a six-unit apartment complex, and several single family homes. According to Mr. Stone, the housing authority and the city were pleased to be able to eliminate a blighted area and restore it with modern public housing units. Those individuals and families who formerly lived in the blighted area were relocated to decent public housing units.<sup>11</sup>

Mr. Guise, of the Hayti Housing Authority, told the Advisory Committee that, of the 104 public housing units built between 1964-67, 66 were 1-bedroom apartments, 34 were 2-bedroom, and 4 were 3-bedroom units. In 1982 the housing authority added 40 units and a community center. Of the 40 units, 15 were 1-bedroom units, mostly for the elderly residents. By the end of 1982, out of 144 units of public housing, there were only 9 units that contained 3 bedrooms. In 1991 the housing authority obtained a grant from HUD and purchased 14 houses, all were 3-bedroom houses.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 175-76.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 182-83.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 341-42.

Mr. Guise noted that he has a four-person maintenance staff; two are black and two white workers. He also has two part-time secretaries; both are white. Mr. Stone added that he reports to a board of five commissioners who are appointed by the mayor. As of the community forum date all the board members were males, with one black person serving as chairman.<sup>13</sup>

Mr. Guise also noted that some of the remodeling work done for the housing authority was let to minority contractors. However, most of the major contracting was with white-owned companies that employed minority workers.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 349-50.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 344-45.

## **5. Administration of Justice**

On January 31, 1992, the city of Caruthersville and the Caruthersville NAACP Steering Committee entered into a memorandum of understanding for "the promotion of harmonious relations between the city and the Caruthersville Branch of the NAACP, and the establishment of an equitable and peaceful procedure for the resolution of differences."<sup>1</sup> (See appendix C.) The memorandum of understanding came about due to a series of allegations made by the local NAACP regarding charges of police misconduct. These allegations included:

1. excessive use of force;
2. use of foul language; and
3. misuse of information by providing media with racially biased reports.<sup>2</sup>

Viola Coleman, a resident of Caruthersville, told the Advisory Committee that some local police officers have abusive attitudes toward black residents. In support of this alleged, she stated that "You call them [police] if you hear shooting around the community, they might come and they might not. Sometimes they don't come at all. This is in the black community."<sup>3</sup>

William Whitcomb, a conciliation specialist with the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice, told the Advisory Committee about some of the issues that brought his agency to Caruthersville. He reported that:

- (1) the community was concerned about the lack or inability to file a complaint about police misconduct;

<sup>1</sup>City of Caruthersville, Mo. and the Caruthersville Branch of the NAACP, Memorandum of Understanding, p. 1, Jan. 31, 1992.

<sup>2</sup>Caruthersville NAACP Steering Committee, Proposal Summary, n.d. (see app. D).

<sup>3</sup>Community Forum Meeting, Before the Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hayti Heights, Missouri, Sept. 17-18, 1992, p. 76 (hereafter cited as Transcript).

- (2) the police lacked standard operating procedures when responding to citizen complaints;
- (3) the community was concerned about a lack of police sensitivity to Afro Americans; and
- (4) the community was concerned about the lack of recruitment and advancement for black persons on the local police force.<sup>4</sup>

Norman Howell, chief of police, city of Caruthersville, gave an overview of his department. He reported that his department's operating budget is close to \$500,000. There are 14 officers, including 3 black officers and 1 Hispanic. Chief Howell noted that:

Now our biggest problem is like in any other city. We have the drugs, shooting out the street lights, shooting in the halls, cars, just regular shootings period. Our next problem is trying to enforce these same laws with the drugs, random shooting, that type of thing. Now, the only thing I can say for us to cope with this kind of thing is we need more training in public relations so we can communicate with some of these incorrigibles.<sup>5</sup>

The Advisory Committee questioned Chief Howell about the process for filing citizen complaints of police misconduct. He reported that he had worked with the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice to develop new procedures. Moreover, he stated that only one complaint had been filed, which was being handled by the mayor.<sup>6</sup>

With respect to developing standard operating procedures with the local police department, Mr. Whitcomb reported that the city was able to institute a mechanism whereby citizens could file a complaint against a police officer for allegations of misconduct.<sup>7</sup>

In line with some of the other issues raised by the local NAACP, Mr. Whitcomb said that the city agreed to institute an ongoing training program to sensitize police officers to

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 155-57.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 315-16. (See also app. E.)

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

racial and cultural diversity. Also, the city agreed to appoint citizens to a police advisory board to review police policies and practices.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

## 6. Summary

In September 1992 the Advisory Committee, in a community forum, heard from over 30 persons discussing the general climate of race relations in Pemiscot County with reference to education, employment, housing, and in the administration of justice. Some of the participants painted a dismal picture concerning the general thrust of recruiting black teachers in the school districts of Caruthersville and Hayti. Others were concerned about employment and training opportunities. Some discussed the lack of an adequate stock of housing and yet others talked about police-community relations.

The present report is a small effort to begin a constructive dialogue on race relations in Pemiscot County. Sometimes it seems that rural areas of the country are not included in most studies on race relations. When this is not done, then a certain focus is lost on these areas. Some residents of Pemiscot County talked about a cycle of hopelessness but had a will to make living conditions better. Yet others wanted to maintain the "status quo." It is the hope and desire of the Advisory Committee that agencies such as the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will focus more attention to the needs of the protected classes in rural America.

APPENDIX A

Mel Carnahan  
Governor

Sandra M. Moore  
Department Director

Paul L. Rodgers  
Division Director



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

DIVISION OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

875 Hwy VV - Post Office Box 807

Kennett, MO 63857

314-888-4518

April 8, 1994

Melvin L. Jenkins, Director  
Central Regional Office of United States  
Commission on Civil Rights  
Old Federal Office Building  
911 Walnut Street - RM 3103  
Kansas City, MO 64106



Dear Mr. Jenkins:

I have reviewed with great interest the draft copy of the summary report on "Race Relations in Pemiscot County". No quotes were attributed to me, and the information I gave the panel concerning the work registrations, job referrals and placements for Pemiscot Countians is correct.

I am, however, concerned about the first sentence on Page 4. While I do not wish to minimize the problem of unemployment in our area, the unemployment rate has not been 18 percent since 1983. Generally speaking, the rate has been in the 7-15 percent range for the last five years. I am enclosing a Fax received from our Research & Analysis Section in Jefferson City for your review.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the report.

Sincerely,

DIVISION OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

*Freddie L. Graham*

Freddie L. Graham  
Local Office Manager

P.S. At the time the panel took testimony, there was no Employment Security Office in Pemiscot County. We opened an office in Caruthersville in November, 1993.

CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE DATA FOR PEMISCOT COUNTY

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	ANN AVG
1994 Labor Force	7,051	6,877	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Employment	6,210	6,067	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Unemployment	841	810	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Rate	11.9	11.8	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
1993 Labor Force	7,829	7,695	7,770	7,737	7,934	8,220	7,908	7,731	7,802	7,763	7,598	7,581	7,798
Employment	6,742	6,628	6,739	6,725	6,881	6,959	6,859	6,716	6,909	6,905	6,757	6,670	6,791
Unemployment	1,087	1,067	1,031	1,012	1,053	1,261	1,049	1,015	893	858	841	911	1,007
Rate	13.9	13.9	13.3	13.1	13.3	15.3	13.3	13.1	11.4	11.1	11.1	12.0	12.9
1992 Labor Force	7,736	7,714	8,078	7,808	7,850	7,654	8,008	7,760	7,762	7,642	7,511	7,541	7,755
Employment	6,952	6,945	7,320	7,077	7,104	6,826	7,172	7,014	7,115	7,057	6,946	6,753	7,023
Unemployment	784	769	758	731	746	828	836	746	647	585	565	788	732
Rate	10.1	10.0	9.4	9.4	9.5	10.8	10.4	9.6	8.3	7.7	7.5	10.4	9.4
1991 Labor Force	8,217	8,365	8,569	8,386	8,422	8,576	8,225	8,381	8,509	8,395	8,319	8,276	8,387
Employment	7,385	7,478	7,658	7,570	7,621	7,674	7,361	7,510	7,781	7,869	7,703	7,570	7,599
Unemployment	832	887	911	816	801	902	864	871	728	526	614	706	788
Rate	10.1	10.6	10.6	9.7	9.5	10.3	10.5	10.4	8.6	6.3	7.4	8.5	9.4
1990 Labor Force	7,966	8,070	8,222	8,322	8,385	8,535	8,108	8,283	8,136	8,364	8,279	8,667	8,278
Employment	7,254	7,355	7,545	7,620	7,829	7,812	7,367	7,523	7,514	7,769	7,593	7,376	7,551
Unemployment	712	715	677	642	556	723	741	760	622	595	686	1,291	727
Rate	8.9	8.9	8.2	7.7	6.6	8.5	9.1	9.2	7.6	7.1	8.3	14.9	8.8

NOTE: 1994 DATA NOT DIRECTLY COMPARABLE TO EARLIER DATA BECAUSE OF CHANGES IN METHODOLOGY  
DATA FOR THIS AREA ARE PROVISIONAL

CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE DATA FOR PEMISCOT COUNTY

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	ANN AVG
1993 Labor Force	8,455	8,331	8,254	8,189	8,197	8,608	8,615	8,739	8,964	8,212	8,029	8,549	8,612
Employment	7,130	7,109	7,177	7,189	7,161	7,336	7,676	7,783	8,039	8,235	8,015	8,312	8,001
Unemployment Rate	13.4	13.2	13.0	12.2	12.8	15.5	12.8	10.8	9.2	9.1	9.0	8.8	11.0
1992 Labor Force	8,641	8,864	8,693	8,630	8,643	8,751	8,938	8,152	8,417	8,523	8,200	8,039	8,941
Employment	7,760	8,845	8,830	8,729	8,614	8,694	8,802	8,837	8,632	8,698	8,207	8,032	8,820
Unemployment Rate	10.2	9.8	9.7	8.4	10.6	11.1	10.3	9.1	8.3	7.3	6.6	9.0	9.2
1991 Labor Force	8,305	8,302	8,450	8,240	8,324	8,355	8,361	8,384	8,335	8,237	8,106	8,900	8,301
Employment	7,903	7,971	8,552	8,308	8,216	8,353	8,365	8,327	8,237	8,386	8,106	8,177	8,301
Unemployment Rate	9.7	10.4	10.1	8.7	9.9	10.2	10.2	10.3	8.3	7.1	9.5	8.1	9.2
1990 Labor Force	8,663	8,875	8,074	8,181	8,330	8,348	8,534	8,292	8,226	8,376	8,251	8,530	8,092
Employment	7,890	8,098	8,318	8,533	8,290	8,350	8,561	8,267	8,298	8,358	8,250	8,183	8,319
Unemployment Rate	8.9	8.8	8.3	6.3	8.9	8.3	7.8	9.2	8.5	7.2	8.2	12.1	8.3
1989 Labor Force	8,831	8,663	8,785	8,159	8,266	8,550	8,233	8,330	8,369	8,356	8,191	8,889	8,134
Employment	7,905	7,707	8,098	8,253	8,601	8,610	8,243	8,239	8,699	8,721	8,202	8,606	8,517
Unemployment Rate	10.3	8.7	7.8	7.7	8.5	7.7	8.6	8.1	7.2	8.7	7.4	7.0	7.8
1988 Labor Force	8,692	8,685	8,643	8,614	8,740	8,117	8,688	8,276	8,878	8,291	8,531	8,506	8,763
Employment	7,866	7,733	7,946	7,692	8,063	8,053	8,249	8,759	8,129	8,290	8,000	8,672	8,086
Unemployment Rate	8.1	8.4	8.1	8.0	9.7	8.5	6.4	8.5	9.6	6.1	4.9	7.3	8.0
1987 Labor Force	8,784	8,898	8,838	8,598	8,732	8,636	8,227	8,603	8,318	8,572	8,557	8,478	8,616
Employment	7,836	7,972	8,693	8,643	8,743	8,729	8,233	8,680	8,580	8,633	8,600	8,623	8,616
Unemployment Rate	10.8	11.2	10.1	8.6	8.3	9.3	8.3	8.8	7.0	7.7	8.8	6.3	8.8
1986 Labor Force	8,680	8,600	8,726	8,584	8,821	8,203	8,375	8,539	8,607	8,654	8,632	8,747	8,681
Employment	7,878	7,634	8,605	8,559	8,830	8,190	8,317	8,791	8,806	8,235	8,256	8,791	8,620
Unemployment Rate	10.1	11.2	10.4	9.9	10.5	11.6	10.2	8.8	9.3	8.3	8.0	9.0	9.8
1985 Labor Force	8,767	8,537	8,701	8,646	8,730	8,290	8,811	8,532	8,805	8,942	8,562	8,598	8,745
Employment	7,632	7,921	7,920	7,881	8,252	8,228	8,802	8,775	8,072	8,528	8,150	8,693	8,816
Unemployment Rate	11.8	10.8	10.6	10.3	9.1	8.7	10.0	10.4	8.9	8.1	7.6	8.1	9.2
1984 Labor Force	8,752	8,569	8,526	8,593	8,632	8,927	8,348	8,719	8,771	8,726	8,406	8,489	8,623
Employment	7,686	7,620	7,530	7,628	8,082	8,188	8,311	8,369	8,631	8,678	8,083	8,620	8,013
Unemployment Rate	13.3	12.2	11.7	12.0	11.4	12.0	12.1	16.0	10.7	9.2	8.6	9.3	11.7
1983 Labor Force	8,605	8,673	8,528	8,310	8,557	8,063	8,635	8,691	8,660	8,517	8,219	8,234	8,489
Employment	7,695	7,921	7,908	7,907	8,131	8,160	8,269	8,114	8,283	8,231	8,204	8,232	8,442
Unemployment Rate	20.1	19.2	17.7	16.9	17.1	16.1	17.9	15.1	14.1	13.9	12.3	12.8	18.2
1982 Labor Force	8,568	8,580	8,538	8,331	8,508	8,431	8,535	8,374	8,392	8,462	8,265	8,205	8,434
Employment	7,483	7,436	7,357	7,181	7,122	7,182	7,069	7,043	7,031	7,031	7,186	7,180	7,109
Unemployment Rate	12.6	13.3	13.8	13.5	14.0	16.8	17.0	16.8	18.3	18.9	18.2	19.3	15.7
1981 Labor Force	8,702	8,783	8,819	8,680	8,913	8,456	8,821	8,885	8,763	8,641	8,525	8,590	8,799
Employment	7,612	7,831	8,881	8,756	8,833	8,998	8,791	8,851	8,783	8,889	8,688	8,601	8,858
Unemployment Rate	10.5	10.6	10.0	8.7	9.3	10.8	9.9	9.6	8.9	8.7	9.7	10.5	9.8
1980 Labor Force	8,220	8,362	8,389	8,669	8,936	8,278	8,260	8,921	8,024	8,720	8,570	8,502	8,713
Employment	7,726	7,927	8,619	8,251	8,660	8,193	8,252	8,669	8,023	8,700	8,571	8,658	8,881
Unemployment Rate	9.7	11.1	9.7	8.3	9.8	11.7	10.8	10.8	10.9	9.6	9.0	10.1	10.1
1979 Labor Force	8,172	8,132	8,244	8,010	8,290	8,381	8,176	8,307	8,390	8,295	8,002	8,056	8,212
Employment	7,652	7,560	7,605	7,371	8,268	8,033	8,197	8,816	8,625	8,260	8,281	8,291	8,788
Unemployment Rate	6.4	6.9	5.3	4.6	4.8	6.8	4.9	5.9	5.3	5.2	6.2	7.7	5.8

GEARL ADAMS, President  
Board of Education

APPENDIX B

DELPHA ABBOTT, Secretary  
Board of Education

CARUTHERSVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ARNOLD E. BELL, Ph. D. Superintendent  
Caruthersville, MO 63830  
(314) 333-4321  
Fax (314) 333-4323

April 15, 1994



Mr. Melvin L. Jenkins  
United States Commission on Civil Rights  
911 Walnut Street, Room 3103  
Kansas City MO 64106

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

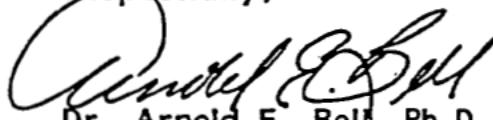
On April 15, we received your draft copy of the summary report of the Bootheel community forum, "Race Relations in Pemiscot County."

Your report gives the impression that there was dialog between Mr. McCoin and Reverend Betty Boston. This is an untrue representation of what actually took place. Also, please note that Mr. McCoin was reading a statement on my behalf since I was the scheduled presenter who was unable to attend.

I would also like to note that Reverend Boston has been a resident of the Caruthersville community for approximately three (3) years. Her comment regarding the mandated plan to desegregate schools and allegations of the loss of black teachers is unsupported.

As Superintendent of Schools for five (5) years, I know we have made every effort to employ minorities. I know this because our district has received an award for our efforts. My assumption of your forum was to gather information, and develop ways to help us achieve the same. You can harp on relations all you want, but we need good minority teachers for our schools and we need your organization to work on ways to attract these individuals to our communities. This type of action will help us meet the needs of our children. I would hope this effort is not just another meet, report and do nothing attempt that wastes government monies.

Respectfully,

  
Dr. Arnold E. Bell, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

c: Representative Donald Prost, Missouri House

## APPENDIX C

# MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding, entered into by the City of Caruthersville (City), Missouri and the Caruthersville NAACP Steering Committee (NAACP), has as its purpose - the promotion of harmonious relations between the City and the Caruthersville Branch of the NAACP; and, the establishment of an equitable and peaceful procedure for the resolution of differences.

This agreement is initiated pursuant to the meeting that took place on November 7, 1991, by the City and the NAACP. Both parties commit themselves to a serious attempt to resolve the issues in good faith and do agree to the following items listed in this agreement.

**Issue I:** Police Community Relations Committee - The representatives of the NAACP believe that often times citizens are not involved in the political decision making process. Issues arise because of a lack of significant interaction, understanding, and trust which inhibits the ability of the community to act on specific issues or to be effective in addressing the common good.

Solution: The parties have agreed that a Police Community Relations Committee be established, in order to provide a vehicle through which concerns of the community could be channeled to City policy makers. It would help maintain safety in the community and provide positive police/citizen interaction.

This committee will have the following function as it recommends specific action in the redress of issues: to examine thoroughly the issues before it; to obtain information regarding these issues from experienced sources; and, to take action to solve the problems. In addition, this committee, with key persons representing the police, the NAACP, and other community leaders, will identify and quickly communicate with persons who could assist in calming racial tension or civil disorder.

The Mayor and NAACP Steering Committee agree that the existing Police Committee will be expanded to five additional members and be renamed the Police Community Relations Committee. The new members will include one member from the existing NAACP Steering

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Committee. The Mayor will ask the four members to submit two names each representing their respective constituency. The Mayor will in turn select four members from the respective councilmanic constituency to serve on the proposed Police Community Relations Committee.

**Issue II: Police/Community Relations** - A report from the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives states that on a daily basis, communities and neighborhoods are experiencing a deteriorating relationship between themselves and the police. The police have become alienated from the community as a result of many factors that stifle personal contact with Black residents. It is typical for Black citizens to isolate the police, due in part to their belief that police don't care and are not responding to crime. The police feel that citizens do not understand them and therefore do not adequately lend their support or cooperation - because of this, there is a need for greater police/community interaction especially in the Black community.

Solution: The City agrees to respond to the following recommendations that would contribute to the amelioration of the gap between the police and its minority citizens.

A) Currently, the City is undergoing a review of their Police Standard Operation Procedure. Upon completion of the standard operations manual, the City agrees to make available a copy of the manual to the NAACP. The City agrees to make available updates to the policy as they occur.

B) The City agrees to develop a formalized mechanism for citizens to file complaints of police misconduct. The development of a Citizen Complaint Handbook will be guided by assistance and models provided by CRS. The City further agrees that the handbook will be disseminated to the NAACP and other organizations. In addition a "Know Your Rights When Arrested" pamphlet will be printed and widely disseminated to guide behavior in the event of an arrest.

C) The City agrees that it will review their Use of Deadly Force Policy. The policy will be reviewed by the City's legal department relative to legal authority, local police department policy, and public opinion.

D) The City agrees that it will accept review assistance and Use of Deadly Force models offered by CRS.

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E) The City agrees, with input from the community, to develop a training curriculum on cultural awareness/sensitivity and conflict management.

F) The City and the NAACP will seek the assistance of the Community Relations Service and other agencies.

G) The City agrees to enforce the current curfew ordinance equitably, without regard to race or color.

**Issue III:** Dearth of Minority Officers on the Caruthersville, MO Police Department (Police Department) - There is a perception that the City is not aggressively pursuing the recruitment of minority police officers. The NAACP believes, since the City is comprised of ethnic groups, each contributing to the over-all community, that this ethnic diversity should be reflected within the police department.

Solution: The NAACP agrees to develop a "minority applicant pool" and the City agrees to accept the applicant pool for police recruitment potential. The City will work with the NAACP and the community to make maximum use of publicity to seek qualified minority applicants.

The Police Department, aided by the NAACP, will endeavor to enlist the support of the public schools in the development of programs and projects designed to interest youths, especially minority youths, in police science.

**Issue IV:** The NAACP expressed concern of a perception of racially biased incidents such as racial overtones when affecting an arrest and the perception that general racism exists in the Police Department.

Solution: To further the effort to eliminate the perception of racism among police, the Police Department, with the assistance of the NAACP, will encourage residents to cooperate with police on crime prevention.

The City agrees that it will make available police officers who will speak at churches, meetings, and conferences on issues affecting citizens and the police. The NAACP will seek the expertise of the Black Public Defender who can speak to the organization on criminal justice system issues.

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**Issue V:** Affirmative Action and Contract Compliance Programs - The existence of these programs ensure the recruitment and hiring of minority citizens and equal opportunities for Blacks and other minorities and vendors doing business with the City.

Solution: The City agrees to research to determine whether or not these programs exist and if not, the City will take appropriate action in order to initiate such programs.

**Issue VI:** The parties recognized the potential problem of retaliation.

Solution: - The parties agree that there shall be no discriminatory actions or retaliation of any kind against any person giving information, assistance, or for participating in the process of this agreement.

Technical assistance in the form of program models and resources will be made available to the parties by CRS in order to assist in the implementation of this agreement.

Review of the Memorandum of Understanding

This document establishes an agreement between the City of Caruthersville and the NAACP of Caruthersville, and it represents the interests of the minority citizens of Caruthersville, Missouri.

This agreement is entered into in good faith and with the sincere effort to work together to alleviate disputes and misunderstandings. The signatures on this agreement represent the commitment of all parties to attempt to resolve the issues identified.

## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

We, the undersigned, agree that this Memorandum of Understanding shall become effective as of the date recorded below.

1/31/92  
Date

Diane Sayre

Diane Sayre  
Mayor of Caruthersville, MO

Dorothy Versey

Dorothy Versey, President  
Caruthersville Branch of NAACP

Bobby Dean

Reverend Bobby Dean  
Southeast Missouri Consultant  
for NAACP

### WITNESS:

William E. Whitcomb

William E. Whitcomb, Conciliator  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Community Relations Service

## APPENDIX D

### - CARUTHERSVILLE NAACP STEERING COMMITTEE

#### PROPOSAL SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

Caruthersville is a small town in the Bootheel of Missouri. It is troubled with a plethora of problems .The focal point is youth unrest vs overzealous police action.The total community is polarized on the issues and the Black community in particular is divided in as many ways as can be described.This proposal addresses these issues and outlines a plan of action for eliminating the problems.

#### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Caruthersville has a long history of institutional racism. Beginning with the educational system and viewing six primary areas of community life a clear pattern of repressive activity can be seen to negatively affect the quality of life for Blacks living here.

##### **Education**

The school system did not begin the integration process until 196<sup>1</sup>ten years after Brown vs the Board of Education. It was a four year phase in process.Ultimately, the community lost the majority of Black teachers and administrative personnel.They were not retained by the school system ,therefore they moved elsewhere to find employment. Needless to say, this virtually eliminated the key element in any growing community-the Black Middle Class. Currently,better than half of all Black high school students are herded into vocational education or have been determined to be special education students. In either case the students are not given the opportunity to explore a future that would be productive.At the other end of the spectrum those students who are gifted and pursue post secondary education eventually leave the community permanently to secure employment. What continues to be left behind are those who can contribute the least.

##### **Employment**

Farming and domestic services were the primary sources of employment for Blacks. As farms became more mechanized and the demand for domestic help decreased these people were ill equipped to find other employment. Those who were unable to migrate north became first generation welfare dependents.

##### **Housing**

90% of the Black population live on the Eastside and it is the expectation of both Blacks and the majority community that this is "their place". Of the approximately 493 Black households less than 1/4 are owner occupied. The remainder are some modified form of plantation living in either public housing or ghetto dwellings.

### **Economic Conditions**

3/4 of the Black community is receiving some form of public assistance {AFDC,SSI,Disability,Food Stamps} or are retired/social security recipients.

There are six family owned Black businesses. Other than providing income for those families they do not contribute significantly to the economic well being of the community.

While there are Black ministers ,teachers, business owners, and others who serve in leadership capacities;there is not a coordinated Black leadership structure.

Black men can be seen in great numbers just hanging out at the "juke joints' all day as if this were a source of employment.

Black male role models are in very limited supply.

### **Criminal Justice**

There are glaring cases of apparent miscarriage of justice that serve to keep the Black community on edge and distrustful of law enforcement and criminal justice.

The Glen Owens Case is one cited daily by Blacks when discussing the issue. This young 15 year old Black male was convicted of statutory rape on a 13 year old white girl. He was sentenced to two life terms in state prison. Key in this case was the fact that while he was arrested when he was 15, he was not tried until he was 17. The girl on the other hand remained a the same chronological age for the same two year period. He was tried as an adult even though the alleged crime took place when he was a minor.

### **Political Participation**

There are currently two Black elected officials serving on the City Council. While they are active and vocal councilpersons their effectiveness is limited. There are no city-wide or county-wide elected officials. The Black community has the numerical strength to elect a person on both of these levels, however they do not believe they can.Whenever there is an attempt and failure to reach one of these offices the community turns on itself.

### **Problem Statement**

The current crisis has been building for the past year.Its origin is not clear but the evidence of a volatile situation can be found in the following issues;

1. The Caruthersville police department is a primary contributor to the problem.Through the standards and direction set by the Chief of police,officers:

a. routinely harass and intimidate youth on the street:

- ex.using foul language when talking to juveniles; picking on youth because of their mode of dress.
- b. fail to follow standard operating procedures,  
ex. male officers physically searching women,making arrests without a warrant
  - c. use excessive force when making arrests or following up on complaints. ex. officers use the club and stungun in situations where there is no resistance or aggressive activity present.
  - d. conduct an intimidation campaign throughout the community,  
ex. constant and vigilant surveillance in certain city blocks.
  - e. distort information by providing media with racially biased reports,  
ex. record black involvement but exclude white involvement in same activity.
  - f. fail to report significant criminal activity,  
ex. a white man while driving drunk,driving too fast for conditions plowed into the back of a car whose occupants were Black juveniles. The youths car was totaled and both were taken to the hospital. This accident has not been logged as a part of the police public record.
- Incidents where truck loads of white men have been riding through the Black community and shooting randomly have been observed. Police have stopped these individuals,taken weapons but no arrest was made nor was a report filed on the incident.
- g. plant seeds of divisiveness in the community.
2. Youth in the community have become a force to deal with. Through informally organized groups a number of antisocial activities take place daily. Among them are,
- a. flagrant disrespect for law and order,
  - b. wholesale curfew violations,
  - c. commission of petty crimes such as loitering,fighting,truancy,
  - d. commission of major crimes such as armed robbery,assault terrorizing neighborhood residents and a host of self perpetuating negative activity.

3. The community- parents,community leaders, and concerned citizens,- lack a cohesive plan of action to address the problems.

#### OBJECTIVES

1. Systematically develop a strong community organization to address the problems.
  - a. Act for the community when implementing martial activities.
  - b. Coordinate plans and activities with existing organizations when addressing problems they are in business to deal with.
  - c. Facilitate training programs to improve the skills of community residents, i.e. community organization skills, negotiation and confrontation skills, understanding the law, standing operating procedures, constitutional and civil rights law.
- 2 .Negotiate a contract with City of Caruthersville to improve police community- relations .The contract would spell out a list of changes the City will make in official policy, method of operations and ongoing relationships with the community.
- 3 .Develop a Youth Development program to include;  
-peer counseling  
-police-youth sensitivity project  
-supervised and instructional youth activities  
-stay in school program  
-youth employment project
4. Develop a vehicle for parent participation to include the following  
- parent patrols in the neighborhood to curb curfew violations and the incidence of group and individual antisocial activity  
- formulate and facilitate a womens support group to address problems faced by female heads of households and other women needing camaraderie and mutual support.
5. Involve actively both local organizations and outside groups to provide training, support, technical advice, and muscle to assist the group in achieving its goal.

#### WHAT WE WANT FROM THE CITY

We want to open communications and create interaction between law enforcement agencies , i.e. police department, sheriffs office, and other agents, and the community.

First and foremost we want the police department to enforce the law equally and fairly.

The Mayor and city government officials should be more responsive to community complaints in relationship to the police department.

Establish a Police -Citizen Commission to review complaints against the police department. The Commission should include an equal number of minority citizen and police officers.

Develop a written complaint procedure and forms . These should be available at the dispatchers desk at all times and available to citizens upon request.

Develop a citizens handbook which covers standard operating procedures of law enforcement.

Develop a University level In-service Training Program leading towards an Associate of Arts/Science to upgrade their general education, especially subjects relating to their abilities to communicate, their skills in crisis management, psychology of human behavior and cultural sensitivity.

Develop employment policies which will require officers to possess or be actively engaged in receiving an Associate of Arts/Science degree in Social Science, Humanities, or Law enforcement.

Develop a community service project within police department where within the total scope of the law enforcement officers job responsibilities include one-on-one involvement with disadvantaged youth in recreation, civic and or church related activities.

Develop a workable minority employment program and actively recruit minority into law enforcement.

APPENDIX E

CITY OF CARUTHERSVILLE  
DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

DIANE SAYRE, Mayor  
NORMAN A. HOWELL, Chief  
CARUTHERSVILLE, MO 63830

200 WEST THIRD STREET  
PHONE 333-2121  
AREA CODE 314

April 12, 1994

Melvin L. Jenkins  
Director  
United States Commission on Civil Rights



DEAR MR. JENKINS:

The Memorandum of Understanding has helped our Department immensely.

I will admit that it has not been followed to the letter, and I am trying to abide by this.

This past Spring 1993, one of my Assistant Shift Leaders had his Car and Home rocked and later had his home shot into twice.

If the Officer caused this I do not know, but we did have a few problems after that.

This Sergeant then decided to run for Chief of Police and our Department has been less than 100 percent effective.

All the time our Election was in process we had hardly any difficulties.

Our Local Election is now over and I remained in Office by a slight Majority.

Once I get my Department back in shape, I hope to do a better job.

I have some new men that have gone to work the past couple of years.

I promised some People in the Black Community I would invite Mr. Bill Whitcomb back to Caruthersville in the Future to give us a Program on Sensitivity.



CITY OF CARUTHERSVILLE  
DEPARTMENT OF POLICE  
DIANE SAYRE, Mayor  
NORMAN A. HOWELL, Chief  
CARUTHERSVILLE, MO 63830

200 WEST THIRD STREET  
PHONE 333-2121  
AREA CODE 314

Maybe we could invite our Sheriff's Department and other smaller Community Police Departments along with some of our Black Leaders in our Community to attend this Program also.

This Program would be a Great help to us all.

I am looking forward to working with you and will be available to listen and work with you on any suggestions or comments that you might have.

Sincerely,

Norman A. Howell  
Chief of Police  
Caruthersville, Mo.

U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS  
Central Regional Office  
911 Walnut Street, Room 3103  
Kansas City, MO 64106

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